



Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs

## Department of Environmental Protection

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Martin Suuberg  
Commissioner

August 10, 2018

The Honorable Thomas C. Hoyer, Jr., Mayor  
Office of the Mayor  
141 Oak Street  
Taunton, Massachusetts 02780

Dear Mayor Hoyer,

Thank you for your letter dated August 1, 2018, asking about the status of MassDEP's efforts to update the Dissolved Oxygen (DO) Criteria for marine waters.

MassDEP is committed to gathering the best and most current water quality science possible, and we remain focused on ensuring that permitting decisions are based on the most current science. MassDEP is actively working on development of updated marine DO criteria, and our work also continues on the collection of water quality monitoring data and developing a monitoring strategy for the Taunton River Estuary / Mount Hope Bay.

Our efforts to update our marine DO criteria are still underway. Over the last two years, we have been working with technical experts from relevant state and federal agencies to review a wide range of technical information and federal guidance on establishing marine DO criteria. This has included consultations with EPA personnel from both Region I and Headquarters, both of whom will need to approve any DO criteria that MassDEP develops. This effort has also included review of the data being collected via the two new DO monitoring buoys that MassDEP deployed in Mt. Hope Bay beginning in fall 2016. We have had some stakeholder engagement sessions on these efforts, including most recently in February 2018 and again in May 2018. I believe representatives from Taunton participated in those sessions. Given the volume of technical information being reviewed and the need to consider possible approaches to the DO criteria (threshold magnitude, frequency and duration) as well as approaches to monitoring guidance, we will be ready to engage with external stakeholders in early 2019 on our findings, our preliminary proposed criteria, and our preliminary proposed monitoring guidance. Any proposed revision to the marine DO criteria will not be ready for inclusion in the forthcoming proposed changes to our surface water quality standards targeted for fall 2018.

This information is available in alternate format. Contact Michelle Waters-Ekanem, Director of Diversity/Civil Rights at 617-292-5751.

TTY# MassRelay Service 1-800-439-2370

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We understand the benefit to the City of knowing what the updated DO criteria will be prior to designing treatment plant upgrades and we will work to provide the most reliable information in as timely manner as possible. The science on DO has evolved considerably since 2001, and the most current science needs to be considered. Based on the information we have analyzed to date, including information and guidance received from both US EPA and from US Fish and Wildlife about the habitat and DO requirements for endangered Sturgeon, we now have indications of what DO criteria will likely be acceptable for the Taunton River Estuary. We also have current DO data from the buoys, which will be utilized as one of the sources of information in establishing the criteria, as well as to assess water quality impairments. We recommend that a meeting be scheduled between the City's technical staff and consultants and MassDEP staff in the coming weeks where MassDEP we can share our latest information and what are potential outcomes.

To proceed with scheduling this meeting, Doug Fine, our Assistant Commissioner for Water Resources, is prepared to work with your lead point of contact to find a mutually convenient time. Doug's contact information is 617-292-5792, [douglas.fine@state.ma.us](mailto:douglas.fine@state.ma.us).

We look forward to continuing to work collaboratively with you and other stakeholders in the Taunton River Estuary and Mount Hope Bay system.

Sincerely,



Martin Suuberg  
Commissioner

cc: Douglas Fine, Assistant Commissioner for Water Resources